

**Coastal Impact Assistance Program
CIAP Project Nomination**

Project Title: West St. Tammany Parish Coastal Wetland Habitat Acquisition

Nominating Entity: Greg Gorden
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CIAP Authorized Use Consistency: (from Coastal Impact Assistance Program: Guidelines and Application for Funds)

4.1 Authorized Uses of Funds

1. Projects and activities for the conservation, protection or restoration of coastal areas.....
2. Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, or natural resources...

CIAP Goals and Objectives

This project meets the restoration and conservation goals outlined in the CIAP Goals and Objectives. Preserving the integrity of Lake Pontchartrain shorelines and the adjacent coastal marshes is squarely within the Goals, Objectives and Strategies of the Coast 2050 plan. This also fulfills the need for conservation of coastal forests and inland wetland and aquatic habitats.

All of the Coastal Restoration Project Evaluation Criteria are met. The primary issue in this project will be landowner negotiations.

Total CIAP Funds Requested: \$3,000,000.00

Tier 1 Designation: \$3,000,000.00 (Parish)
 \$0.00 (State)

Tier 2 Designation: \$1,000,000.00(Parish)
 \$2,000,000.00 (State)

Project Background

Lake Pontchartrain shoreline in its natural state is a finite resource in St. Tammany Parish. Only about 8.5 miles of forested shoreline remain in this parish excluding Fontainebleau State Park. That resource is likely to be placed under enormous

development pressure in the near future and it should be the goal of the St. Tammany Parish Government to preserve what is left of the cypress lined shoreline, and adjacent fresh marshes, for both its historic value as well as its irreplaceable habitat, water quality, and otherwise natural value. A significant portion of the cypress swamps of the Pontchartrain/Maurepas Basin have been either logged, drained or cleared for development or agriculture. Southwestern St. Tammany Parish is no exception. However, the shoreline of Lake Pontchartrain remains in relatively good ecological health. As the shoreline slowly migrates backwards, older trees fall into the lake providing shelter for biota and natural breakwaters for energy directed at the shoreline. This creates a strip several hundred yards wide that forms the transition between inshore wetland habitat and the lake's deeper water habitat. Despite the natural rearward movement of the shoreline, however, this fringe habitat still maintains its integrity and productivity.

In St. Tammany Parish, this particular habitat type exists only between the parish's western boundary and the Lewisburg area. The lake shore east of this has been converted to sterile bulkheads, except for the few hundred feet of Green Fund property in Mandeville. Once you reach the shoreline east of Mandeville, it is a fringe intermediate marsh habitat interspersed with residential bulkheads or other artificial shoreline structures all the way to the Mississippi border. The residential development industry tends to mistakenly view property such as this as appropriate for upscale development because of its proximity to water. However, the continued existence of this area in its natural state is crucial to the water quality of Lake Pontchartrain and the general safety of the populations immediately upland from storms. This is the first line of defense that low lying areas have against surges brought on by tropical storms and hurricanes. Submerged aquatic vegetation that is crucial as shelter and nursery areas for aquatic species, many commercially important, is experiencing a comeback since the abatement of shell dredging has decreased turbidity in the lake and the dredging and bulkhead work required for residential development will reverse this trend.

Coast 2050, this state's blueprint for the next half century of coastal resource management, has established the preservation of the Lake Pontchartrain shoreline integrity as both a "coastwide" as well as a "regional" strategy. This project fits squarely within that intent. It should be noted that the Coast 2050 strategy does not state only that the location of the shoreline should be maintained, but its ecological integrity. To do this, acquisition must play a part.

Project Description

Contract to an objective firm to identify various funding sources and mechanisms for acquiring and setting aside natural Lake Pontchartrain shoreline habitat and adjacent fresh marsh centered around Madisonville, specifically between the westernmost parish line and Lewisburg. The target acquisition area consists of between 2500-3000 acres of shoreline habitat and 1000-1500 acres of fresh water marsh more or less. That firm will then aggressively coordinate the utilization of those sources and mechanisms to accomplish just that. It is the intent of St. Tammany Parish to acquire and otherwise preserve the integrity of the Lake Pontchartrain shoreline where it exists in its natural,

ecologically healthy state.